

Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries
E-mail and Draft Press Release

LaRue Liam

From: Morris, Ronald [rmorris@wlf.louisiana.gov]
Sent: Wednesday, January 17, 2007 3:25 PM
To: LaRue Liam
Subject: FW: Copt. Morris. This is Mitch and I have a few more pictures to send you

From: Morris, Ronald
Sent: Friday, October 13, 2006 9:14 AM
To: Gardner, Selena; Einck, Adam
Subject: FW: Copt. Morris. This is Mitch and I have a few more pictures to send you

Selena & Adam,

This is the tug boat, Mrs. Mason that was involved in the accident yesterday in St. Mary parish. There were two tugs and a small jack up boat fighting the fire. The Yanco O, the Miss JOANN and the Tiger. The Tug that is burning was adrift with one of the barges still attached burning. The barge had wood poles that are used for platforms and they were totally engulfed in flames. The other barge was had a crane that is used for driving the pilings in the ground was also totally engulfed in fire. This explosion happened at approx 12 noon on 10/12/06. I, Captain Ronald Morris, was at the New Iberia office working with Sgt. Mitch Darby on a recreational boating accident when we received the 911 call. We were only about 15 from the location and the closest so we drove code 3 to the sycamore pt location and could see the smoke for miles out as we were approaching the boat landing. We had to ride out in the bay for several miles before we arrived at the location. There was a USCG JET circling the location when we arrived. Four of the crew had already been picked up by local oil field crews working in the area and were on their way to local medical. Only two of those survived the explosion. That left four unaccounted for. Two LDWF patrol boats from the Lake Charles, sheriff's office patrol boats from Iberia & St. Mary Parishes and a USCG Helo from Group NO area arrive by one pm to assist in the grid searches for any survivors while the haz mat crews worked on the fires. LSP and DEQ Haz mat found the remains of the Captain of the tug Mrs. Mason on board after the fire had been extinguished. That left only three crew members missing. The three tugs then started fighting the fire on the remaining barge and had it put out by 4 pm. The LSP Haz Mat crew was going to board that tug today Friday October 13,, after daylight for recovery. LDWF has patrol boats from Region 9 in the area to assist with any Search and Rescue.

2006-310 – ***Pictures of accident available upon request by emailing aeinck@wlf.louisiana.gov or tgresham@wlf.louisiana.gov.***

L.D.W.F. ENFORCEMENT DIVISION AGENTS ASSIST WITH SEARCH AND RESCUE EFFORTS

Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Enforcement Division agents assisted with search and rescue efforts yesterday when a tugboat named Mrs. Mason exploded into flames after colliding with a natural gas pipeline in West Cote Blanche Bay. The accident left three people dead and three missing.

LDWF agents Capt. Ronald Morris and Sgt. Mitch Darby were only 15 miles from the Cypremort Point boat launch when they received the 911 call around noon. Morris said they could see the smoke for miles from the shore and had to ride several miles by boat into the bay before arriving at the scene.

“Four people from the crew had already been picked up by local oil field crews working in the area when we arrived,” Morris said. “Only two of those survived the explosion and that left four still unaccounted for at that time.”

Two LDWF patrol boats from the Lake Charles office carrying agents Lonnie Gamble, Brody Roberts and Gene Viator arrived at the accident scene around 1 p.m. to assist in the grid searches for any survivors, Morris said.

After two tugboats and a small jack-up boat extinguished the Mrs. Mason fire, Louisiana State Police and Department of Environmental Quality Hazardous Materials teams found the remains of the tugboat’s captain, leaving three crewmembers still missing.

The two tugboats and the jack-up boat then extinguished the fire on the remaining barge still attached to the Mrs. Mason around 4 p.m.

Morris said that a U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) jet was circling the accident when they arrived on the scene and that patrol boats from Iberia and St. Mary parishes Sheriff Offices with a USCG helicopter arrived at 1 p.m. Officers from DEQ and State Police were also on the scene.

Hazardous materials crews are continuing recovery efforts today.

EDITORS: For more information, contact Capt. Ronald Morris at rmorris@wlf.louisiana.gov.